

Diversity Council Annual Report January 2001 – December 2001

Council Members for year 2001:

Molly Vallant - Chairperson, Rita Hanson – Vice Chairperson, Brad Collins – Secretary, Kay Kaufman – Alternate Secretary, Alma Britton, Joyce Daye, Patricia Deese, Darlene Dixon, Tommy Gates, George Kimble, Linwood Koonce, Tom Hawkins (NIH catalyst), Phil Jones, Carolyn London (HRMB Rep), James Mason, Valeria Shropshire, Diane Spencer, Deepak Srivastava, J.D. Thomas, Helen Watson (Union Rep), Michelle Winston, Jennifer Anderson (EEO Rep)

January:

Diversity Council Officers met on January 8, 2001 to discuss plans for the year. The officers wanted to explore ways to improve on the activities undertaken by the council in previous years. After brainstorming, it was decided to explore ways for the Diversity Council to promote teamwork at the Institute by learning about the many different kinds of jobs done by the Institute staff. The officers decided to develop this idea further and meet again in February to formalize the concept.

The first meeting of the Diversity Council was held on January 9, 2001.

After the introduction of new and returning members, the charter and the bylaws of the Diversity Council were discussed. All members were encouraged to sign up for two committee assignments.

The Diversity Council now has a group address in the e-mail global address list. The council also has a web page that may be accessed at the following URL:
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/divcouncil/>

Martin Luther King Day: The Martin Luther King Day celebration was held January 10, 2001, in the 101-B Conference Room with Ms. Miriam Thomas (WTVD News anchor) as keynote speaker. The theme for her presentation was “Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On ... Not A Day Off.” A small booklet with some of Dr. King’s famous quotes was handed out during the program. There was a reception immediately following the presentation, with food prepared by Diversity Council members. The program was very well attended.

February:

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held on February 13, 2001. A proposal to shadow people at the Institute who are doing jobs different from the shadower was presented to the entire council. The members of the Council endorsed the idea and

suggested the concept be presented to Dr. Olden for approval. It was decided that this new program called “Learn and Appreciate,” would be spearheaded by Tom Hawkins (NIH Catalyst) as a new initiative.

Black History Month: The Black History Month Program Celebrations started out with an African-American Art Extravaganza held in the building 101 lobby February 5–8, 2001, from 9:00 until 2:00 each day. The artists represented were Vanya’s Arts and Accessories (Feb 5-6) and Artful Greetings (Feb 7-8).

On February 15, 2001, Mr. Orage Quarles, Editor of the *News and Observer*, gave a talk in the 101-B conference room on “Creating and Defining the African-American Community: Family, Church, Politics, and Culture.” Immediately after the talk, a reception was held in the cafeteria featuring African-American style cuisine. Two handouts were offered at the reception: “Black History Tour Book,” and a book of recipes on cooking African-American style.

March:

Molly Vallant met with Dr. Olden on March 9, 2001 to discuss Diversity Council issues. Molly presented the Learn and Appreciate program, which will offer an opportunity for employees at the institute to learn about jobs that are performed by others and thereby develop an appreciation for the value of each employee and the diverse services they provide to the institute. Dr. Olden was very enthusiastic about the program and asked Molly to present the idea to the Executive Committee at their next meeting, which she did.

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held on March 13, 2001.

Women’s History /Equality Month: The theme for Women's History Month was "Celebrating Women in Courage and Vision." The Diversity Council sponsored two programs. Dr. John Penta gave a presentation on March 20, 2001, on "Breast Cancer: What It Is and What You Need to Know." The second program was held on March 22, 2001, in room 101B. The topic of the panel discussion was "Women's Health: How Do I Make the Health Care System Work for Me?" The panelists for this program included the following: Dr. Jonathan Sheline, MD (Family Practice), Dr. Wyler Hecht, ND, LAC (naturopathic physician, licensed acupuncturist), and Ms. Carole McCrary, BS RN (NIEHS occupational health nurse).

April

Rita Hanson attended the Diversity training “Diversity in the New Millennium: NIH Managing Diversity Forum & Champions of Diversity” held in Natcher Conference Center on April 4, 2001. The speaker, Trevor Wilson, discussed “Global Diversity at Work.”

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held April 10, 2001.

Administrative Professionals Recognition Program: The Administrative Professionals Recognition Program was held April 19 in the 101-B conference room. The two speakers were Mr. Philip Lenowitz, who spoke on training, mentoring and career potential and Ms. Sandra Lange, who spoke and did a slide presentation on her personal career path and experiences. A prize drawing was held at the end of the program. The program was well attended and feedback was positive.

May

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held May 8, 2001.

Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Program: Dr. Gerald D. Bolas gave a talk titled "Asian Art: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow at the Ackland Art Museum" on May 14, 2001 in Rodbell Auditorium. It was followed by an origami demonstration, with participation from employees. Ethnic (Chinese and Indian) refreshments were also served. The program was very well received.

June

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held June 12, 2001. The EEO office presented the "Reasonable Accommodation" policy at NIEHS to the members of the Diversity Council.

July

The Diversity Council meeting for July was held July 10, 2001. Two students who participated in the Model Institute of Excellence (MIE) Program shared their experiences at NIEHS with the Diversity Council. National Science Foundation, in partnership with NASA, funds the MIE Program.

August

The monthly meeting for the Diversity Council was held August 14, 2001. Clyde Hasty from the Health and Safety Branch demonstrated the Evac-Chair and explained how disabled persons would be assisted out of the building in an emergency at NIEHS.

September

The monthly meeting of the Diversity Council was held September 18, 2001. At the meeting we discussed the fallout from the events of September 11 and decided that it is consistent with the mission of the Diversity Council to bring a forum to promote tolerance and acceptance of people of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim beliefs. A discussion followed and a committee was formed to assemble a forum for discussion of Islamic tolerance. It was also decided to present a concept proposal to Dr. Olden for approval. We proposed assembling a panel consisting of historians, counselors, and

representatives of the local Islamic community. The panel would be there to address questions that the NIEHS community may have about this ethnic group. Dr. Olden approved the concept.

Hispanic Heritage: On September 19, 2001, Dr. Marie Miranda and Ms. Alicia Overstreet gave a presentation called "Environmental justice and Environmental Health Issues for the Hispanic Community." This event was co-sponsored by the Diversity Council and DERT. After the presentation traditional Latin American food was served in the lobby. There was also a poster in the lobby showing traditional medicinal herbs of Latin America.

Arrangements were made to have Mr. Chris Hunt give a safety talk to the custodial staff with Spanish translation. A Spanish language poster dealing with safety issues has been posted in all custodial closets next to a similar English language poster. Similar Spanish language fliers have also been prepared as handouts. The Executive Committee has given its approval to the idea of posting Spanish language hazard signs on laboratory doors, next to similar English language signs. FEB staff is working to have these signs produced and posted.

October

The monthly meeting of the Diversity Council was held October 9, 2001.

Disability Awareness Program: Karen Kurzeil MD, from Medical College of Virginia gave an informative talk "Living and Working with Multiple Sclerosis" on October 2 in Rodbell Auditorium. There was also a display in the lobby detailing support animals. Kelly Godfrey, an NIEHS employee was in the lobby on October 24 with Panther, her hearing assistance dog companion. Videos about assistance dogs were also shown continuously in the lobby.

Forum for Understanding and Acceptance: The program "The Middle East and Central Asia: History, Culture, and Religion" was held October 16, in Rodbell Auditorium. Dr. Akram Khaetr, Professor of Middle East History (NCSU); Dr. Charles Kurzman, Professor of Sociology (UNC); and Ms. Virginia Fox, Clinical Manager, Magellan Behavioral Services, were the panelists. The presentations were followed by questions from the audience. Time was provided for the NIEHS staff to share personal experiences. This program was very well attended and we had extremely positive feedback from the staff. The EEO office and the Health and Safety Branch co-sponsored this event.

November

The monthly meeting of the Diversity Council was held November 15, 2001.

Native American Heritage Month: The Native American Heritage Month celebrations started with an Opening ceremony on Thursday, November 1 at 11:00 AM and featured

Brandi Chavis, who is “Little Miss Lumbee” and a fourth grade student from Lumberton, North Carolina. She performed traditional Native American dances and songs. Gwen Locklear, a Lumbee Indian Artisan, showed the children from NIEHS day care how to make “friendship bracelets” and displayed Native American arts and crafts, which were available for the NIEHS staff to purchase. Native American snacks prepared by Diversity Council members were served.

On November 15, Brett Locklear of the Triangle Native American Society shared information about North Carolina Native Americans and the Triangle Native American Society. Sacagawea Hallmark American Spirit collectable ornaments and a doll were given as door prizes.

Learn and Appreciate Program: Dr. Olden sent an e-mail to all employees encouraging participation in the program. Most visits took place between October 15 and November 16. Approximately 35 employees participated in this initiative, including Dr. Olden and Dr. Anne Sassaman. The responses from the participants were very positive, and many would like for this program to be repeated again next year.

December

The monthly meeting of the Diversity Council was held December 11, 2001. Officers for 2002 were elected (Chairperson, Brad Collins; Vice Chair, Diane Spencer; Secretary, Patricia Deese). Jennifer Anderson (EEO) presented the Affirmative Employment Plan for 2002.

International Day: The Diversity Council invited One World Market to participate in the NIEHS Craft Fair held December 6, 2001. (One World Market is a not-for-profit volunteer based fair trade hand craft store located in Durham, North Carolina. Craft sales provide low-income artisans and farmers from around the world a living wage for their work.) To accent the international theme, various items from around the world brought in by NIEHS employees were displayed in the glass case in the lobby during December.

The International Day Celebration was combined with the NIEHS awards ceremony and holiday celebration and co-sponsored by the Office of Management. On December 14, 2001, immediately after the awards ceremony, there was a reception in the cafeteria. A variety of international snacks were served. There was music, story telling, and NIEHS staff from around the world writing peoples’ names in different languages. Children from First Environments came and decorated the Christmas tree with flags from around the world that they made. Copies of *Sharon Finds the Environment*, an educational book written by Tom Hawkins, were autographed and distributed.